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Ortho-bionomy

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Ortho-bionomy Definition

Ortho-bionomy is a form of therapeutic bodywork, based on the principle that gentle and non-invasive body alignment has a positive influence on physical and emotional disorders.

Origins

Ortho-bionomy was developed in the 1970s by Dr. Arthur Lincoln Pauls, a British osteopathic physician who was also an accomplished martial artist. Pauls was influenced by the principles of **osteopathy** that state that the function of the body is related to its physical (skeletal) alignment; that proper circulation of the blood and lymph is crucial to health; and that the body contains built-in mechanisms that can be triggered to correct imbalances and diseases. Influenced also by Eastern philosophy, Dr. Pauls searched for a system of healing that was gentle, non-invasive, and that worked with the body's inherent wisdom, rather than using forceful methods to manipulate problems involving posture.

Dr. Pauls was guided toward his system of bodywork in the 1960s, when an American osteopath named Lawrence Jones published a paper on a phenomenon he called "Spontaneous Release Through Positioning." Jones claimed that muscle spasms and painful injuries can be treated by the gentle repositioning of the part of the body that was painful. For instance, if a person injures a knee, the muscles and tendons around that area tighten, sometimes to the point of **pain** and spasm. The tightening protects the knee from further injury. When the injury begins to heal, the muscles and tendons around the area retain the memory of the injury, and have changed in structure. This change affects the bones, joints, and overall alignment of the body. By gentle and comfortable repositioning of the area into its proper alignment, a therapist can prompt the muscles to self-correct, releasing tension and trauma while re-educating the body's memory of the injury, and speeding the healing process.

Dr. Pauls built upon this concept when developing Ortho-bionomy. Influenced by Eastern **martial arts**, Pauls built his idea on the premise that the physical body and the emotions are deeply connected. Pauls developed "Phased Reflex Techniques," which is based on the body healing itself in phases. In effect, there is a gradual release of the emotions and traumas that occur after physical injuries. Pauls also believed that reflex actions in the muscles play a key role in healing injuries, and that by utilizing knowledge of these reflexes the therapist can gently and effectively boost the body's ability to self-correct. These reflexes are contained in the proprioceptive nerves (nerves that are present in the muscles and tendons that provide feedback on the body's movement and alignment). These nerves are influenced by emotions, and they affect the movement of the body. Healing begins by re-educating these nerves toward correct alignment and movement. Emotions held inside are released. Pauls developed a detailed system of bodywork techniques based on these principles. For instance, he found that the greater the stored trauma around an injury, the longer the therapist must reposition the area to provide a full release of healing potential.

Dr. Pauls termed his system Ortho-bionomy, which means, "the correct application of the laws of life." In the mid-1970s, he began teaching his system in the United States and Europe.

Benefits

Ortho-bionomy is used to alleviate chronic pain associated with injuries, muscle and joint problems, and arthritis; reduce **stress**; increase circulation; enhance **relaxation**; and improve problems of posture or structural alignment. Its gentle technique is recommended for acute pain and rehabilitative injuries. **Ortho-bionomy is incorporated into other healing treatments.** For example, massage therapists may use this technique to relieve knotted muscles. Some of the **techniques may be used to relieve cramps, back pain, sore muscles, and**

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headaches.

Ortho-bionomy is safe for newborns, the elderly, and those in post-operative conditions. Athletes and dancers may improve performances with the therapy by increased balance and flexibility.

Description

A session with an Ortho-bionomy therapist is similar to other therapeutic massage sessions. The patient remains clothed. Emphasis is placed on comfort, and on a trusting and open relationship between patient and therapist. Open communication from the patient provides feedback and assists in the discovery and release of emotional issues. The therapist may use a range of hands-on techniques, including light touch, smooth movements, gentle pressure on reflex points, finding and working with points of tension and pain, gentle prolonged bodypositioning for release, and re-education exercises. Therapeutic movements are done slowly and gently, so that they do not create additional stresses. Some therapists may employ non-physical touch, to work upon the energy field of the body, similar to the touch used in reiki. Generally, a series of treatments is recommended, as Ortho-bionomy is based on the idea that healing occurs in gradual phases. The goal of treatment is to ultimately increase the patient's awareness on the physical and emotional levels and—through this awareness—to promote re-education and elimination of unhealthy patterns.

Preparations

No special preparation is needed prior to Orthobionomy treatments.

Precautions

Consumers may check with a practitioner to determine the level of Ortho-Bionomy training he or she has completed.

Side effects

There are no reported side effects of Ortho-bionomy. The therapy is gentle, painless, and non-invasive.

Research & general acceptance

Ortho-bionomy is done in countries around the world, indicating that it has grown in popularity since the early work of Dr. Pauls.

Training & certification

Ortho-bionomy is taught and practiced worldwide. Some massage therapy schools offer Ortho-bionomy as a specialty course in conjunction with general massage therapy. Ortho-bionomy is also done by other health practitioners including naturopathic and osteopathic physicians.

The Society of Ortho-bionomy International has developed two training programs for professionals, a basic practitioner program and a senior practitioner program. Both offer theoretical coursework and supervised hands-on training. Students choose individual advisors during their training. The Society's Web site has links to Orthobionomy practitioners in a number of states, as well as countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

Resources

BOOKS

Kain, Kathy L. *Ortho-Bionomy: A Practical Manual*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1997.

Schultz, Louis R., Rosemary Feitis, and Diana Salles. *The Endless Web: Fascial Anatomy and Physical Reality*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1996.

PERIODICALS

Tornick, Annie Woods. "Ortho-Bionomy: Dancing in the Still Point." *Massage Magazine* (March/April 2003): 114. <<http://www.massagemag.com>>.

ORGANIZATIONS

Society for Ortho-Bionomy International. 5875 North Lincoln Avenue, Suite 225. Chicago, IL 60659. (800) 743-4890. <<http://www.ortho-bionomy.org>>. Publishes *Ortho-Bionomy News*.

Douglas Dupler

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